



University of New Haven

Office of the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Testimony for the
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**

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University of New Haven
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On behalf of the University of New Haven, I am submitting testimony in strong support of Section 12 of [**S.B. 982: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION**](#) which seeks to make permanent our institution's exemption from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education, without a cap on the number of programs we may introduce without approval.

By way of background, non-profit, private colleges that are regionally accredited and maintain certain standards have been exempt from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education in some form since 2016. At times there have been caps on the number of programs that an institution which is exempt may introduce, but for the last two years, eligible institutions have had no cap on the number of new programs we may introduce. This bill seeks to make permanent that existing policy.

Connecticut is one of only a handful of states that require private, non-profit colleges to seek state approval for its new programs. It is the **ONLY** state in the country that requires program approval for private colleges and not public colleges.

The University of New Haven knows of no known benefit to a review by the Office of Higher Education when our current internal, robust curricular review process meets the criteria set by our regional accreditor, NECHE. We subject all new programs to the same curricular review. An initial feasibility study determines whether there is student demand, employment opportunity, and financial merit to launching a new program. Proposing faculty develop and document the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and curriculum assessment plan, which are then vetted by the hosting academic department, college dean, office of academic assessment, university curriculum committees, and office of the provost prior to filing for a license with the Office of Higher Education. Reinitiating an OHE approval process will add an unnecessary and time-consuming step, slowing our ability to launch new programs and to be responsive to the state's workforce needs. The role of the Office of Higher Education should be to promote program development and innovation, not to complicate it or limit it.

Policymakers may have consumer protection concerns, given recent news related to the sudden closure of a for-profit institution in our state. It is important to understand that this statutory provision for exemption requires institutions to be regionally accredited. NECHE already provides strong oversight of the University, its academic programs, and their assessment. The University of New Haven successfully completed its 10-year comprehensive review in 2020, preparing a substantive self-study in advance of the site visit and review. Furthermore, numerous University of New Haven programs are subject to accreditation by 15 professional agencies and undergo rigorous review processes to maintain those agency accreditations. Our professional accreditors include ABET, the Association to Advance Collegiate



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Schools of Business (AACSB), the Forensic Science Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC), the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association, and others ranging from art and design to occupational therapy. Every college in the University offers agency-accredited programs, and we seek such accreditations wherever they are available. Given that our programs are already monitored by NECHE and frequently by outside agencies, the applications and reports to OHE are redundant and inefficient.

During the period of exemption from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education, the University of New Haven has been able to quickly launch several market-responsive programs. A new MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, launched in 2018, is enrolling strong cohorts of students in both an on ground and online format. Our BS and MS degrees in Medical Lab Science, designed to educate laboratory technicians for the state's many hospitals and medical facilities, launched in 2019 and 2022, respectively, and hosted a successful site visit by the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences prior to their final approval. New programs in Esports & Gaming, Human Resource, Occupational Therapy, and Marine Policy & Management have been developed and deployed during the exemption period. It is also important to note that that, during the past 5 years, the University of New Haven has not exceeded the previously held 12-license per year limit. Relatedly, we have acted to close a dozen programs whose demand had waned, and did so on our own initiative, without prompting from OHE or elsewhere. Our stringent internal requirements for developing, vetting, and maintaining academic programs means that the University conscientiously manages the number of programs it launches in any given year.

In the past, OHE review processes have added only time and expense, for both us and the State, while not contributing to existing effective quality assurance processes. Instituting a permanent exemption of academic program review by OHE will allow the University of New Haven to continue to develop new, market-responsive programs, without sacrificing academic quality, in an economical and timely fashion.

Thank you,

Nancy Ortins Savage, Ph.D.

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